



# County of San Diego

## HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY

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Border Health  
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HIV, STD and Hepatitis  
Immunization  
MAA/TCM Program  
Maternal, Child and Family Health Services  
Public Health Laboratory  
Public Health Nursing  
Tuberculosis Control & Refugee Health  
Vital Records

January 14, 2014

TO: School District Superintendents  
School District Nurses

**RE: 2013/14 Influenza Activity**

Dear School District Superintendents and Nurses:

Influenza activity is now widespread in San Diego County, as well as nationally. There has been a rapid increase in the number of locally reported cases over the past weeks. Some schools have reported increased numbers of student absences and have asked about reporting requirements to Public Health Services (PHS). This letter provides an update about when to call Public Health Services, as well as information about how to help keep your students and staff healthy.

**Reporting to Public Health Services.** We are requesting that you notify the PHS Epidemiology Program (619-692-8499) if you become aware of a student at your school who is critically ill, hospitalized, or has died from suspected or confirmed influenza. In addition, please notify the Epidemiology Program in the following circumstances:

- At least 10% of average daily attendance is absent with influenza-like illness (ILI),\* sustained over a 3-day period.
- When 20% of an epidemiologically-linked group (e.g., single classroom, sports team, or after-school group) has ILI sustained over a 3-day period, with a minimum of 5 ill individuals.

*\*ILI is defined as fever ( $\geq 100^{\circ}\text{F}$  or  $37.8^{\circ}\text{C}$ ) plus cough and/or sore throat.*

**Prevention.** We appreciate the efforts of school health personnel in preventing the spread of influenza. There are many respiratory infections that can spread from person-to-person and cause symptoms similar to influenza. The recommendations listed below may not only help reduce the spread of influenza, but other viruses and bacteria circulating in the community, as well.

Here are recommendations that can help keep your students and staff healthy through this influenza season.

**Encourage students, parents, and staff to get a yearly influenza or “flu” vaccine.**

- The seasonal flu vaccine is recommended for everyone 6 months of age and older, unless there is a contraindication determined by a medical provider.
- In addition, it is recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) that all health care personnel obtain the annual vaccination.
- This year’s seasonal flu vaccine is considered to be a good match with the circulating strains. The vaccine is safe and effective, and can help prevent severe complications and hospitalization due to influenza. Keep in mind, however, that no vaccine is 100% effective.
- Flu vaccines have a very good safety record. Hundreds of millions of Americans have received the vaccine over the years. The most common side effects are soreness, redness, or swelling at the injection site. The flu vaccine cannot make you sick or give you the flu!

**Encourage students, parents, and staff to take everyday prevention steps.**

- Promote good respiratory etiquette. It is recommended that ill persons cover their mouths and noses with a tissue when they cough or sneeze, or to cough into their elbows.
- Encourage good hand hygiene, which means hand washing with soap and water for 20 seconds.
  - If soap and water is not available, hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol may be used.
- Surfaces that are touched often should be routinely cleaned using the general cleaning products already in use and following the manufacturer’s instructions.
  - These surfaces may include desks, countertops, doorknobs, computer keyboards, any hands-on learning objects, faucet handles, and phones.
- Promote policies that encourage students and staff who are ill to stay home.
  - Students who are ill with ILI should stay home until at least 24 hours after their fevers are gone (without the use of medicine).
  - If a healthcare provider prescribes antiviral medication, students and staff should be encouraged to take it as prescribed and complete the course of medicine.

We will continue to monitor influenza activity within the county through the season and are available to answer any questions you may have. Please call the Epidemiology Program at 619-692-8499 for additional information.

Sincerely,



Wilma J. Wooten, M.D., M.P.H.  
Public Health Officer  
Director, Public Health Services

Cc: Dr. Randolph E. Ward, Superintendent, San Diego County Office of Education

